

Gender Disparities in Education Administration and Management in Kenya

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Abstract

There are indeed glaring gender disparities in representation at all levels of education administration in Kenya. It is worth noting that women the world over are still grappling with leadership both in education and the corporate world even in the 21st century. Since independence, there has been gross under representation of women in Kenya in both political and other leadership spheres. The central problem of this paper is to highlight the causes behind the dismal representation of women in leadership positions in education management. The paper is based on a study which sought to find out the barriers perceived by women aspiring to climb the management ladder in the education sector in Kisii County. The title of the study was “Barriers perceived by female secondary school principals and their coping strategies”. These barriers are akin to ‘ceiling’ preventing women from full participation in leadership. The specific objectives of the study were to identify the barriers hindering women principals and other women aspirants from full participation in education management and secondly, to find out the coping strategies they employ. The study used a descriptive sample survey design and sampled schools from the larger Kisii County in Nyanza province by use of stratified random sampling. Ten girls’ boarding schools and five mixed schools headed by women principals were thus selected. The sample size of sixty-seven respondents comprised women principals, deputies (both male and female) women teachers and education officers’ from the County Education Office. Instruments included an interview schedule for women secondary school principals and questionnaires for the rest of the respondents. The instruments were piloted in one school before their administration by use of test-retest procedure of Spearman rank order correlation and their validity was judged by a panel of my competent supervisors. Data analysis was done by use of SPSS after editing and coding. Percentages and frequency distribution tables were used to analyze data. Tables, charts and graphs were used to represent data. The study found out that women face some institutional, socio-cultural, political and personal barriers as they aspire to move up in education management. They have devised strategies such as aggression, assertiveness, participative leadership, teamwork, furthering studies and attitude change to mitigate against the perceived barriers. The study recommends policy revision such as; in the area of separating administrative work from boarding and accommodation of students to enable more women to seek administrative positions and still be able to attend to their women roles of motherhood and nurturing their families. The government should also consider appointing more women ministers for better representation and policy formulation in parliament. Establishment of children day care centers at remote areas will entice many women to take up leadership positions which they had earlier shunned. The Ministry of Education could also review the policy of headship of schools based on the gender of students to give women an even play ground for their upward mobility. This will in the long run increase gender parity in education; which is one of the key millennium goals in the Kenyan National Development Plan. This paper is like a wakeup call to all stakeholders to provide an even playing ground for all gender from the basic levels to the higher echelons in the education sector.

Key Words: Gender; Education; Disparities; Female; Mobility and Principal

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